



Trustees' Annual Report for the period

April 2024 To March 2025

**Birmingham Community Hosting Network
Also known as BIRCH Network**

Address; 204 Scott House, The Custard Factory, Gibb Street, Deritend,
Birmingham, B9 4AA

Charity registration number: 1151763

Trustees:

Chris Benfield

Katherine Green

Kamilla Khalid

Emma Hawthorne

Nicole Lewis (from 26th July 2023, resigned Oct 2024)

Isobel Knowles

Fatima Batool (from 15th May 2022, resigned 15th September 2025)

David Newsome (from 1st March 2024)

Andrew Jolly (from 22nd Nov 2025)

Independent Examiner: Gerald Gurriet

Trustees Report:

Objectives and Activities

Objectives as set out in the constitution:

The relief of financial hardship amongst those seeking asylum in the United Kingdom or who are refugees, and who reside in the West Midlands.

To preserve and protect the physical and mental health of those awaiting and those granted refugee status and their dependents.

Activities:

- Community hosting network for destitute refugees and migrants
- Befriending and advocacy support for separated young refugees
- Sessional activities and support for newly arrived asylum seeking families
- Outreach support to newly arrived asylum seekers living in hotel accommodation

Trustee's Responsibilities in Relation to the Financial Statements.

The charity trustees are responsible for preparing an annual report and financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice). The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the charity trustees to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs and of the incoming resources and application of resources of the charity for that period. The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records that disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 1993, the charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 and the provisions of the trust deed. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Summary of main achievements

This year was another very busy year and saw staff supporting more sanctuary seekers than the previous 12 months - over the course of the year we supported 649 individuals. Despite there being many changes to the asylum and huge problems with delays, backlogs, policy and legal changes, our staff have remained flexible and responsive in their support. As an organisation we have achieved some fantastic outcomes for our beneficiaries and have increased our advocacy work significantly to fill the gaps left by closures of other services or changing needs. Our team have made referrals to over thirty different agencies across Birmingham and the West Midlands, most notably we have made referrals to: The Bike Project, Refugee Action, Refugee and Migrant Centre, St Chad's Sanctuary, Birmingham Children's Trust (for age dispute cases), Brushstrokes, Breaking Barriers and Restore.

The year was very challenging for staff and volunteers and we are prioritising our staff's wellbeing and have been exploring ways to ensure staff feel supported. Our staff team lead the West Midlands response to the Rwanda detentions during April and May and this was a very intense period for all those involved. Followed quickly by the riots in the summer and some intense support to 100 men who were moved out of a hotel in Rotherham, meant that staff felt quite depleted by Autumn. Staff now meet more regularly for wellbeing sessions and regularly check in with each other and our Development Worker feeds any concerns into the Trustee Board. We will continue to monitor these situations.

Our hosting project remained quiet as per the previous year but we were happy that we were able to support two destitute asylum seekers, providing 30 nights of accommodation despite receiving approximately 20 referrals and enquiries - sadly many did not meet our criteria but where possible, we provided invaluable information to a range of other agencies which enabled them to take action to avoid destitution for their service users.

Our family befriending and advocacy project has been extremely busy, supporting over 161 separated young refugees - 61 of whom were age disputed (the Home Office Border Agency gives them a date of birth making them an adult, despite the young person claiming to be under 18). Much more of our time has been spent on supporting these age disputed young people. Our youth hub has continued to grow and we offered 29 youth hub sessions, recording 393 attendances from - 102 young people. Demand for the youth hub is growing and becoming more of a focus of our work. In response, we have increased the number of volunteers at the hub to support our staff and plan to try to increase staff support going forwards. We are very grateful to the community at St. John's Sparkhill for their support since we moved to using their Church Hall in January 2025. The youth hub offers a safe and welcoming space for the young people who attend but we also offer a holistic approach to helping to improve the confidence and resilience of the attendees. We continued to offer a lot of one-to-one advocacy support for those who needed it and made many referrals to a wide range of relevant support services. We also continued to offer our befriending support and matched ten young people with family befrienders as well as supporting several historical ongoing matches which go back a number of years. A couple of our volunteers also befriended a group of four young refugees who were struggling in hotels, offering weekly support sessions in the hotels and meeting them as a group for outings. Some of these young people would have struggled in one to one befriending situations and we are keen to develop this group befriending model going forward as an alternative to our traditional befriending model.

Our family support project continued to offer a great deal of advocacy work to the families, single women and couples who live in a city centre asylum hotel. The project supported, 166 individuals, 100 adults and 66 children - who made up 44 families and 45 single people/couples. Our project coordinator ran 37 community hubs in the hotel - recording 787 attendances. On average 25 family members attended each hub, a mix of adults and children. The hubs involved a lot of emotional support, sorting out practical issues, advocacy with various agencies, a lot of health advocacy, liaison with GPs etc, help with applying for schools and also guiding family members through the Right to Remain Toolkit to help them prepare for their asylum interviews. We supported 65 children to attend school and 22 young people to go to college/higher education and also secured 12 nursery places for under 5s. We also ran 10 wellbeing trips and activities which included visits to Martineau Gardens for

their spring and summer celebrations, several trips to Botanical Gardens, Think Tank Science Museum, Birmingham Cathedral and Roundhouse Art Sessions.

Our hotel outreach in other asylum support hotels was also extremely busy, and our outreach coordinator supported 311 individuals, the majority single men. Our outreach worker ran hubs in three hotels across Birmingham and currently runs weekly hubs in two hotels and offer remote WhatsApp support to a third hotel. Across the three hotels, our coordinator ran 76 community hubs recording 849 attendances, on average 11 people attended each hub. At the start of the year much of the advocacy work focussed on the Rwanda detentions and providing emotional support to many residents including for those who had fled to another city to avoid possible detention. Over the summer, many hotels appeared to be emptying, so there was a shift to referrals to nationwide organisations as people were dispersed. During Refugee Week in June our coordinator organised a photographic exhibition for Refugee Week in collaboration with The Exchange at University of Birmingham. Sadly, the summer brought riots, a lot of fear and distress and resulted in 100+ asylum seekers being suddenly relocated to a Birmingham hotel from the Holiday Inn Rotherham which had been attacked and set on fire. Our focus changed rapidly to supporting a large number of people who had suffered a very violent attack. Our coordinator contacted Victim Support, who provided legal advice and were able to offer therapy sessions, Humans For Rights who offered legal advice, Restore for befriending, Birmingham City Council's Migration Team to fund St Chad's Sanctuary for extra clothing. This also included a huge amount of advocacy work to liaise with the Home Office around new addresses, missed asylum interviews, sorting out medication, access to GPs, locating belongings etc. Then in the autumn, the focus shifted again as the Home Office started to process asylum claims and disperse residents very quickly. Since then we have witnessed a high turnover in the hotels which means that we now focus more on support for interviews (travel arrangements and prep) and lots of support for submitting appeals, lots of referrals for successful applicants for moving on support accessing e-visas. We are also having to support more refused asylum seekers and are having to support them to appeals. Over the year we also ran six wellbeing activities which included visits to Martieau gardens, Illuminate Festival at Botanical Gardens and theatre trips.

The Development Worker continues to support staff to develop their projects and explore new funding opportunities. Our worker has drawn in funds from a wide range of funders over the course of the financial year as well as raising awareness of our work, which has resulted in a strong amount raised from community donations. We are in a good financial position going into the next financial year and hope to continue to develop our projects and maintain our reserves.

Structure, Governance and Management

The charity is operated under the rules of its constitution adopted on 5th Feb 2013.

Financial Review

Birmingham Community Hosting (BIRCH) Network has a generous pool of local and regional charitable trusts and funders, as well as support from the National Lottery and good support from individual, and community funders. BIRCH raised **£87555** from charitable trusts and

foundations, and **£6718** from community donations; we raised **£680** in sales from our shop sales. **£66,455** was allocated as restricted funding for specific projects, **£21,200** was received as 'core/unrestricted running costs' funding which was designated to specific projects. **£7298** was unrestricted community donations, most of which went into our reserves. We also received **£4467** in income for specific items for individuals or for bus tickets for asylum seeking children to attend school. This is separated from other income as this is not spent on staff or project costs.

At the end of the financial year, we had secured total funds of **£94,953** during this financial year. We also carried forward **£83,861** from the previous financial year. At the end of the financial year we had **83,295** in secured cash funds. Out of these funds **£31,158** (unrestricted funds) was designated to reserves (accounting for four months of operating costs), **£30,855** (restricted funds) was carried forward and designated to the projects that the funding was restricted to and **£21,200** (unrestricted/core funding) was designated to specific future project funding.

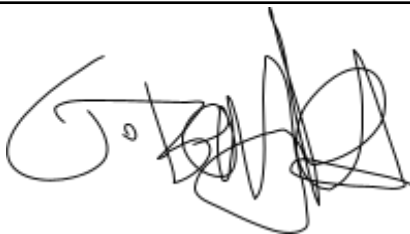
Reserves policy

Our reserves policy states that we should hold three months operating costs.

Declarations

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signatures		
Full name	Emma Hawthorne	Chris Benfield
Position	Chair of Trustees	Trustee and Treasurer
Date	01/10/25	01/10/25



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report
on the accounts

Section A

Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the
trustees/directors/
members of

Birmingham Community Hosting Network

On accounts for the year
ended

31 March 2025

Charity no.:

1151763

Company no.:

Set out on pages

Responsibilities and
basis of report

I report to the charity trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity for the year ended 31 March 2025.

As the charity's trustees of the Charity, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charity Act 2011 ("the 2011 Act").

I report in respect of my examination of your charity's accounts as carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ("the 2011 Act"). In carrying out my examination, I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission (under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act).

Independent
examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (other than that disclosed below *) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that:

- ☒ Accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- ☒ The accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:

Name:

Relevant professional
qualification(s) or body
(if any):

Address:

Gerald Gurriet

Association of International Accountants

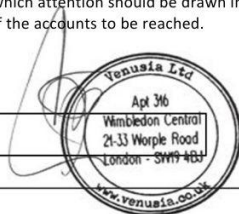
Venusia Ltd

London, SW19 4BJ

Apt 316 Wimbledon Central, 21 – 33 Worple Road

Date:

28 June 2025



Receipts and payments account

For the year ended 31 March 2025

RECEIPTS	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds	Last year
	£	£	£	£
Funds received	28,498	66,455	94,953	118,193
Total Receipts	28,498	66,455	94,953	118,193
PAYMENTS				
Charitable Activities	31,674	59,450	91,052	70,629
Payments to individuals/bus tickets	-	4,467	4,467	9,491
Total Payments			95,519	80,120
Net of Receipts/(payments)			-566	38,073
Cash funds last year end	55,534	28,327	83,861	45,788
Cash funds this year end	52,358	30,856	83,295	83,861

Analysis of expenditure

Project	Total 2024/25	Total 2023/24
	£	£
Family Fun Sessions	19,532	30,354
Family Befriending	40,171	20,708
Hosting Network	2,201	4,982
Refugee Outreach Project	19,421	15,678
Development Work	14,276	8,399

Total	95,600	80,120
--------------	---------------	---------------

Analysis of income 2024/25

Income	2024/25
Type of income	Amount
Restricted Funding	
Archer Trust	1000
Awards for All National Lottery	19968
Baron Davenport Charity	750
Birmingham City Council	5845
Charitable Aid Foundation	2859
Comic Relief Fund	3433
Dudley Trust	1000
Dulverton Trust	5000
Edward & Dorothy Cadbury Trust	2000
Eveson Trust	3500
George Fentham Charity	2500
George Henry Collins Trust	1000
Grimmit Trust	2000
Hilden Charitable Fund	5000
Patrick Trust	1000
Richard Kilcuppe Trust	1000
Saintbury Trust	5000
South Birmingham Friends Institute	2000
Tesco Stronger Starts	500
William A Cadbury Trust	1000
Total restricted income	66355
Unrestricted Income	
Anonymous Charitable Trust	5000
Christmas Shop Sales	680
Cole Charitable Trust	1100
Community donations (inc. Gift Aid)	6466
Eric W Vincent Trust	500

Gowling Trust	1000
Marsh Charitable Trust	600
Misc	102
Parker Johnson Prentice Trust	3000
Selly Oak Quakers	150
Society of the Holy Child Jesus	10000
Total Unrestricted Income	28598
Total Income	94953